

Bureaucracy and Broadcasting

Quite a stir has taken place in British Broadcasting circles by the resignation of seven important officials. We reproduce below extracts from the comments of "Popular Wireless" on the subject. This position is interesting and thought provoking in relation to the best means of securing absolute efficiency in the administration and control of so intimate a feature of public life as broadcasting. Broadcasting depends essentially upon its popular appeal and immediate responsiveness to public needs. How far can a bureaucratic Government system of control meet those conditions? This is a very important question, in so far as it affects the best means of meeting the drastic needs of the broadcasting service.

"AS we anticipated," says "Popular Wireless," the resignation of Captain Eckersley has created a widespread sensation—and a really insistent demand to know the reason for the resignation, not only of Captain Eckersley, but of other B.B.C. officials.

"Anybody with intelligence will realise that, so far, only a hint of the real facts about these resignations has come to light. For example, when Captain Eckersley resigned, he was asked by a 'Daily News' reporter what he had to say about his resignation, and his reply was:

"I can only ask you to apply to the B.B.C. We discussed this matter, and agreed that it would be better that nothing should be said beyond what was said in the official announcement." (he italics are ours.)

"The 'Daily News' reporter said: 'You realise that, in view of all the resignations which have occurred at Savoy Hill lately, the reticence which is being observed on your part will be ascribed to a difference of opinion. Would that be unjust?'

the resignations of other high officials of the B.B.C.; and, although we must state definitely that Captain Eckersley has not in any way broken his self-imposed rule of silence as to the reason for his resignation, we, being in touch with many important sources of information in connection with the B.B.C., now feel it our duty to put before our readers a few observations concerning these resignations.

"First, we might refer our readers to the resignation of Mr. R. E. Jeffrey. A few days ago, Mr. Jeffrey, in an interview with a representative of the 'Daily Mail,' said, inter alia,

"I told Sir John Reith, when I first resigned, that I had not a job to go to, but that, with such a vacillating policy in the B.B.C., work for me was impossible. He persuaded me to withdraw my resignation, but another six months' work convinced me that I had been right, and I resigned. There is no one who will say 'Yes' or 'No' to an idea in a day. It has to be well analysed, discussed in committees, and finally massacred until there is only a ghost of an inspiration, and the heat of enthusiasm has gone.

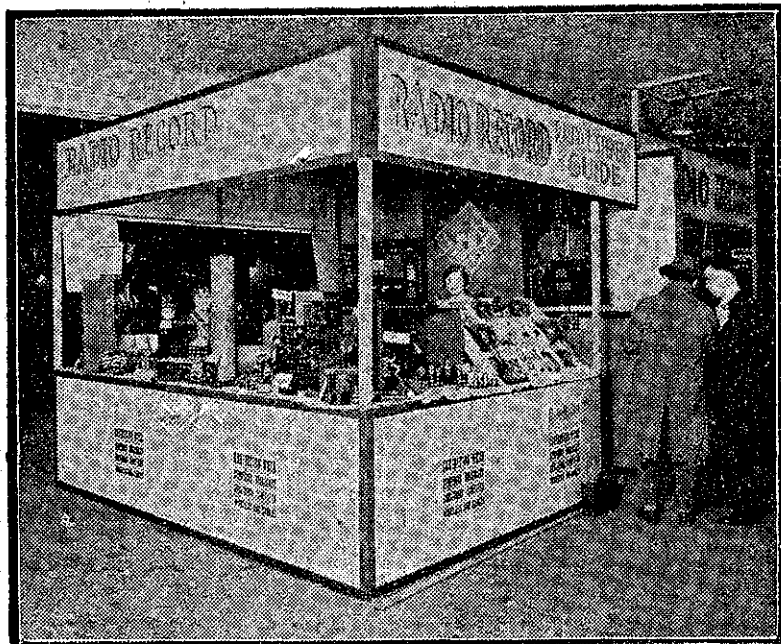
man, on being allowed to think as a man, on doing my job as a man, and not like an automaton.' I did not agree with the methods on the entertainment side of the B.B.C. I felt I could be successful at Savoy Hill in a very much higher degree than I was if I said to myself: 'I have five people to entertain with my programmes, five people who are in a superior position to myself. If I put them on something which was quite popular with the public that item was quite often unpopular with the five people whose position was superior to mine, and who were able to tell me what they thought of me.'

"Mr. Jeffrey suggests in the interview he has given to the Press that he had to consider five people in connection with his work more than the thousands and thousands of listeners who might like the broadcasts he arranged. In other words, Mr. Jeffrey always felt that certain higher officials had to be considered before the public; and that, of course, was an impossible position for any man to work under.

"FROM time to time we have known of disagreements between the



The "Mullard Car" plying through Wellington did much to advertise the Exhibition. —Maybury Photo.



Photograph showing the antiquated apparatus displayed on "Radio Record" stand. To the right the Technical Editor is seen discussing a problem.

—Commercial Photographic Service.

"I can only refer you to the B.B.C.," replied Captain Eckersley.

Other Cases.

"But it is the duty of the Press to inform the public, to the best of its ability, the reason, not only for Captain Eckersley's resignation, but for

This goes on right through the building. If my subordinate had an idea I could not put it through for him. I had to tell him to wait, and I would do my best; and so he lost heart. He left two years before I did.

"Later, Mr. Jeffrey said: 'My whole point when I discussed my resignation with Sir John was; I insist on being a

"The people who constituted the listening public had to become less important to me if I wanted to keep my job. And people who are now engaged in arranging programmes and trying to find suitable acts for broadcasting would, if they dared, tell you the same as I am telling you now. It was on behalf of the staff I resigned. I thought that perhaps this gesture might lead to making things easier all round.

Rights of the Public.

"MR. JEFFREY is to be congratulated on his courage in at last coming out into the open and telling the real facts concerning his resignation. We venture to say that in many other cases the same views which culminated in his resignation were held by some of his other companions at the B.B.C., and we venture to say that there are still many people on the staff of the B.B.C. who feel as Mr. Jeffrey feels about the conditions under which work has to be carried out.

"From our knowledge of affairs at the B.B.C., we have no hesitation in saying that many of these resignations have been brought about by the great difficulty experienced by some chiefs of departments in their relations with the governors of the B.B.C.

"The Press have been curiously slow in failing to realise that it is not only salaries, and it is not only a Civil Service atmosphere (which is more or less inevitable in a Government concern like the B.B.C.), which have caused all the trouble. But it is not likely that men like Captain Eckersley or Mr. Jeffrey, or Mr. Cecil Lewis and other highly responsible and skilled people, are going to tolerate bureaucratic interference, from the governors.

chiefs of departments and the governors, and we suggest that the trouble at the B.B.C. will not be purged until the governors realise that the only way to get the best out of a man is to leave him reasonably alone when he occupies an important position.

"Petty interference and the introduction of personal likes and dislikes about programme items in connection with the work of important B.B.C. officials in the programme department will inevitably lead to discord and dissatisfaction.

"It is not a question of any dissatisfaction with the leadership of Sir John Reith. It is true that Sir John holds some views which many people violently disagree with. We ourselves do not always see eye to eye with his policy; and it is perfectly true that many members of Sir John Reith's staff do not see eye to eye with him in connection with the B.B.C. programme policy; but, nevertheless, Sir John Reith is an inspiring personality, and has a highly developed sense of justice and fairness, especially in connection with his staff. And the public may take it for granted that the discontent at the B.B.C. which has resulted in the resignations of so many important members has but little to do with a personal dissatisfaction with Sir John Reith.

"We repeat again, it is with the governors that the root of the trouble lies. Their appointments were always criticised, and their capabilities for the office even more criticised, and we sincerely hope that something will shortly be done radically to change the situation with regard to the governorship of the B.B.C."